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Sixth Step : Religious Teaching.

Nowhere is there more clearly taught the cardinal idea of all prophecy than in the events and utterances of this portion of Scripture, *Obedience to the command of God* : (1) A nation's past sufferings and misfortunes may be attributed to a failure to serve and obey Jehovah (12 : 9) ; (2) a nation's future prosperity will be determined by this thing, viz., whether it obeys or disobeys the commands of God (12 : 24, 25) ; (3) a ruler who acts knowingly in opposition to the divine will, deserves and receives the reprimand of God ; (4) the ruler, or individual, who disobeys the divine injunction, and endeavors by pretext to justify the disobedience, making confession only to save appearances, is one whom God and God's representatives will surely reject (ch. 15) ; (5) " to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams " (15 : 22) ; (6) " rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim " (15 : 23).

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON AS A SUBJECT FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

1. **Preliminary Statement.**—An important yet difficult problem in expository preaching is the treatment of an entire book of the Bible. It is here that the best results ought to be attained. Simply and clearly to draw out and apply the contents of so large and yet so closely connected a portion of Scripture as a single book, affords the finest opportunity to the expositor. Yet the way is not clear of difficulties, quite formidable ones, which also are not always anticipated. A discussion of the method in such a task, with suggestions which it is hoped may prove helpful, will be entered upon at this time. The Epistle to Philemon, one of the shortest and simplest of these books, will be considered.

2. **A Practical Example.**—The sermon of Dr. Maclaren, a master of the art of preaching, on Philemon, will be taken as a basis for study and criticism.* To accomplish the best results, the reader should have this book and study it carefully in connection with the epistle itself in the English Bible. In the space at our command only brief hints can be given to serve as a guide to further thought and investigation.

3. **The Method and Contents of Maclaren's Exposition.**—The material is treated in six discourses. These take up the following portions of the epistle : (1) vs. 1-3 ; (2) vs. 4-7 ; (3) vs. 8-11 ; (4) vs. 12-14 ; (5) vs. 15-19 ; (6) vs. 20-25. The topics into which the discussion of this material is divided may be thus summarized :

1. General remarks about the epistle and its significance.
2. The writer and the persons addressed, vs. 1, 2.
3. The apostolic salutation, v. 3.
4. The character of Philemon, vs. 4, 5.

5. The prayer for him, v. 6.
6. The apostle's joy in his character, v. 7.
7. Love beseeching, v. 8.
8. The appeal of love, v. 9.
9. Approach to the subject matter, vs. 10, 11.
10. The fugitive slave returned, v. 12a.

* The exposition here referred to is in the volume, *Colossians and Philemon*, by Alexander Maclaren, D.D., in the series of expository works, called *The Expositor's Bible*, published by A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York. Many of the books of this series are valuable to every student of expository preaching.

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| 11. Paul identifies himself with Onesimus, v. 12b.
12. His purpose which was laid aside, v. 13.
13. His decision, v. 14.
14. The divine purpose in the slave's flight, vs. 15, 16.
15. The definite request, v. 17. | 16. Love assuming the slave's debt, v. 18.
17. Reminder of a greater debt, v. 19.
18. The request in its final form, v. 20.
19. Love confidently commanding love, v. 21.
20. Love hoping for reunion, v. 22.
21. The parting greetings, vs. 23-25. |
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These twenty-one topics are each treated at more or less length. For example, an analysis of the discussion of topic 10—the fugitive slave returned—reveals the following course of thought: Paul sends the fugitive back to slavery and he returns. But the Gospel does not sanction slavery. Its principles, the love of God for all men, universal offer of redemption, individual responsibility, cut it up by the roots. This is proved by the course of history, though the New Testament never directly condemns slavery. The apostle may not have expected that slavery would cease. The attitude of Christianity toward it is the same as toward all unchristian institutions. By slow progress it overcomes them. The Christian should patiently but positively help on all social progress and seek thus to bring in the fullness of the kingdom of God.

4. **The Principal Features of this Treatment.**—From a study of the whole discussion of Dr. Maclaren, it will be seen (1) that the Scripture is taken up verse by verse in the order in which it stands upon the page; (2) that the connection of thought and the meaning of each passage is simply but plainly stated; (3) that, the teaching of each verse being ascertained, it is applied to the Christian life and thought, social and individual, of the present day; (4) that this application is made more pointed and forcible by the frequent use of illustrations and analogies drawn from present life and thought.

5. **Criticisms of the Treatment.**—These features, just mentioned, are worthy of careful consideration by expository preachers. But it is not to be supposed that the end of the matter is reached when this method of work is adopted. On the contrary, there are some serious defects here which also enter into the secret of much of the failure that is experienced by others who attempt expository preaching. Briefly stated they are these: (1) In the careful and exhaustive discussion of details the unity of the whole epistle is obscured if not lost; even the thought presumably contained in each section is overlayed by the elaboration of the thoughts in the verses which compose it; no definite conception of a single, simple, controlling idea in the book is impressed upon the mind; a series of verses is expounded, a book is not expounded. (2) In many instances a passage is discussed, but not opened; talked about but not explained. Much is well said concerning the verse, but that is not exposition; what is really said in that verse is not emphasized. (3) In more than one case an application of a passage is made when the thought applied is very indirectly if indeed at all found in the passage itself. Dr. Maclaren is very successful in this kind of remark and suggestion, but it is inference and not exposition. It affords a fine field for the exercise of his marvelous power of practical teaching and for the pouring forth of his abundant stores of learning and imaginative material. But it is a dangerous liberty for less gifted and self-restrained men than he. The passage itself, if it is lacking in material for application, should not be forced to supply or suggest it. (4) Too much material is given. The six discourses might be well compressed into one-half that number. All theology can probably be found in any book of the Bible, but each book need not be forced to yield it. An index made of subjects considered at more or less length in these expositions would be surprisingly long and full. To be sure the attempt is not made to compel the verses to yield all this

material, but still it is there by inference or analogy, greatly weakening the real purpose which it is presumed that the writer had—to tell what message the book has for men and women to-day.

5. **Conclusion.**—It may be thought that this discussion and criticism of Dr. MacLaren's expositions should be followed by some positive and practical suggestions. But this work may be left to the earnest and faithful student of expository preaching. It will not be difficult to estimate the force and bearing of these criticisms. Their outcome should be the raising of questions like these—What is the best method of making an exposition of the Epistle to Philemon? What is the true method of discussing an entire book of the Bible in an expository sermon? More detailed and definite remarks presenting this fruitful subject in other aspects will be presented later.

"YALE RATIONALISM."

One cannot think that Dr. Mendenhall, in *The Christian Advocate* of June 6th, intended to do anyone an injustice. That, however, injustice has been done will appear, I am quite confident, from the following brief statements which I beg to make. I shall refer only to questions raised in that article concerning opinions expressed in the journals of which I am editor.

1. *The citations and quotations made.*—In all some twenty or more cases are cited, from the two journals, which seem to indicate a "rationalistic" (used here in the bad sense) spirit and tendency. Of these three are found in editorials, eight in editorial reviews of books or articles, about twelve in articles by contributors.

(a) So far as concerns the editorials (1) the "higher criticism" was defended; but it was a higher criticism which included the work of such critics as Green and Bissell, not "destructive" criticism; the difference, though ignored by some of our religious editors, is world-wide. (2) Who will deny that it is a mistake to treat as miraculous and supernatural, what, from the very face of the narrative, may be explained in a natural way? (3) It was the magnifying of the divine element to such an extent as to lead to an utter ignoring of the human element that was counted an error.

(b) In the case of reviews, it is only fair to say (1) that the book known as *The Inspired Word* was criticized not because it defended the "plenary inspiration of the Scriptures" (the statement to this effect, as well as some others, being really a misrepresentation), but because it contained certain papers (one in particular, which argued the divine inspiration of the Hebrew vowel-points) which by those who maintain plenary inspiration are regarded as absurdly unscientific and unreliable. (2) Certainly one ought not to be taken too severely to task for saying that an article published in the *Reformed Quarterly Review*, that most staid and careful of all Reviews, "was worthy of careful consideration." (3) One may speak of Genesis as a compilation, as was done in the notice of Deane's *Abraham*, without thereby departing from the views of even the most conservative, for Genesis, though Mosaic, is a compilation; (4) The words "the very boldness and progressiveness of the later criticism lay it open to assault" were intended to criticize the later criticism, rather than anything else; (5) Surely the commendation of Wellhausen's *History of Israel* only to "such as were well established in the faith" was a warning to those who were not well established to let it alone. In